

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**CAN MINORITIES SUCCEED IN TODAY'S ARMY?**

by

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This SRP is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Strategic Studies Degree. The views expressed in this student academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

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Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE <b>03 MAY 2004</b>		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED -	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>Can Minorities Succeed in Today's Army</b>				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) <b>George Sears</b>				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA, 17013-5050</b>				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT <b>See attached file.</b>					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>26</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			



## ABSTRACT

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TITLE: Can Minorities Succeed in Today's Army?

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 19 March 2004 PAGES: 26 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

The United States Army strives to produce an array of fully qualified Army leaders that represent its diverse nature. Developing minorities for leadership roles has been a key focus for the Army, but is the Army truly providing the appropriate direction, skills, training, education, career management guidance and leadership to nurture, develop and retain minority personnel to become senior leaders ? Is the Army walking its talk? This paper provides the framework and basis to answer this question. It will attempt to answer whether minorities can succeed in the Army by examining the level of diversity within the senior officer ranks. It will seek conclusions about the background of entry-level minority officers-family ties, social skills and mentorship opportunities-that may have influenced their rates of upward mobility, showing why some "make it" and others do not, and why Hispanic American (the nation's largest minority group) are severely under-represented. The paper will look briefly at the historical precedents for today's Army; and will address Army personnel policy reform initiatives, designed to help meet its future objectives, and provide an analysis of the promotion rates of senior officers. This paper drawing upon conclusions from previous studies by former senior service school students, will determine if there are continuing trends or improvements. By highlighting similarities and differences in the methodology and the results of those studies, it will attempt to point the way to future successful research. This paper concludes with recommendations to assist strategic leaders in nurturing, developing and retaining minority officers to become successful leaders of the future Army.



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## CAN MINORITIES SUCCEED IN TODAY'S ARMY?

The policy of the U.S. Army is to provide equal opportunity and treatment for soldiers and their families without regard to race, color, religion, gender, or national origin and to provide an environment free of sexual harassment. This policy (1) applies both on and off post; (2) extends to soldiers and their families; (3) applies to soldiers working, living and recreational environments (including both on- and off-post housing). Soldiers are not accessed, classified, trained, assigned, promoted or otherwise managed on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, or national origin except as—(1) the direct combat probability coding policy applies to women, (2) necessary to support established affirmative action goals.<sup>1</sup>

—Army Regulation 600-2

The American Military has been traditionally viewed as a leader in providing equal opportunity for its personnel since the 1948 Executive Order, signed by President Harry S. Truman, formally began the process of racial integration. Full integration was finally achieved in 1954. The military has been lauded as the nation's leading agency in developing policies that ensure all personnel are given an equal chance at advancement. It has even compiled records that show where it provided equal opportunities, that surpassed those of the wider society. But the complicated relationship today between the majority and the minority culture in the military is at last one of mutual tolerance, in which neither group has a clear understanding of each other. Is the military today doing all it can for equality across the board? The question whether minorities can succeed in today's Army is still a powerful one with no clear cut answers. However, other possible causes may be the more subtle and apathetic manner in which young minority officers are mentored, and a lack of common cultural understanding between minorities and their usually, white superiors.

To examine this question, one needs to define "minority." In most cases, minority refers to groups of people in the United States who are not part of a white majority. According to the American Heritage Book of English Usage, a minority is, socially speaking, an ethnic, racial, religious, or other group having a distinctive presence within a larger society.<sup>2</sup> The well known dictionary, Merriam Webster adds that a minority is "often subjected to differential treatment." It further states that a minority group is one that experiences a pattern of disadvantage or inequality; one that shares visible distinguishing traits or characteristics; a community of consciousness; an ascribed status and birth; and a tendency for endogamy (marriage within the group).<sup>3</sup> So, for the purposes of this paper the term, minority will refer to African Americans,



Hispanics, Asian-Pacific Islanders and Native Americans. While women in the military have certainly experienced discrimination and harassment, I will not address this group in this study.

In the Army, success or failure of minority officers can be determined by four principal determinants: education, developmental assignments, mentoring and the clash of cultures.<sup>4</sup> Based on these, it may be possible to determine if a minority officer is likely to succeed in the U.S. Army.

The key stages for officer progression include recruiting, commissioning, training, assignment, evaluation, promotion and retention. Unlike practices of other organizations, entry into the military occurs almost exclusively at the junior enlisted and officer grades—very limited lateral entry. Apart from direct appointments—for those professionally qualified in a particular field—commissioned officers begin their military career at the lowest grade. No one is hired to be a major, colonel or general. Senior positions in the organization's rank structure are filled through a system that advances personnel strictly from within, based on time in service, ability, and performance criteria. So the Army's leaders must be a subset of the human resources that enter the system at its origin. Examining how minorities fare in each of these stages of progression can help determine the extent to which minorities have a chance of succeeding in the Army.

The yardstick used to measure success in this paper is that of reaching senior leader status by way of uniformly available and official encouraged means like displaying leadership, exceeding the normal rate of promotion, having experience in militarily-desirable types of assignments. Reaching senior leader status through less uniformly available means, like mentoring or learning an unusual and needed foreign language is perhaps more certain, but that route depends on a combination of personal characteristics and luck—which is a less firm foundation on which to project the likelihood of a group's success.

## **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

The presence of racial minorities in every battle fought in the name of the United States of America can be documented throughout history. They have always been recognized to the utmost, but they have been committed from the earliest beginnings (pre-Revolutionary War) to the present.<sup>5</sup>

Dedicated service by minorities in the Army is not new. Since the formation of the nation, and even before that, during the Colonial Period (1528-1774), local militias welcomed free and enslaved Africans to enlist and fight against Native Americans, and later the French. Several Hispanics provided discrete or covert aid to the colonists. Records of early participation in the colonial and revolutionary wars by Asian-Pacific Islanders are sketchy. Records of their

participation start with the Spanish-American War in 1898, when Filipino Army units fought side by side with the American Navy against the Spanish in Manila. Army Indian Scouts were employed by the U.S. War Department in 1866 to provide a force in Indian territories. From the American Revolution to the most recent War on Iraq, minorities have picked up arms in defense of the United States. Despite this, all minority groups at one time or another historically have experienced the “Three R Syndrome:” reject-recruit-reject.

- **Reject**—initial rejection occurs at the outset of periods of hostility (not allowed to enlist);
- **Recruit**—subsequent recruitment takes place when personnel requirements became heavy or when personnel were scarce. After their induction, most minorities were segregated, either poorly trained intentionally to keep them at a basic level or openly relegated to lower level or hazardous jobs;
- **Reject**—finally rejected again, once hostilities were over. Units were disbanded and the racial minorities were released from any requirements to serve (despite their desire to continue service). In some cases minorities were denied veteran benefits.<sup>6</sup>

The “Three R Syndrome” is a source of discrimination that may have kept minorities from reaching the top echelons of the Army. In essence, it indicates that while one may become necessary during certain times, the need is not a constant.

Although minorities have been involved in all conflicts, their experiences in the Army did not vary significantly from the disparate treatment and segregation characteristic of American society at that time. By and large, instead of leading by example in terms of its integration and acceptance, the Army simply reflected the wider society.

Many may agree that overt racism and racial discrimination generally do not exist in the Armed Services, given the current regulations and zero tolerance policies. But a Defense Equal Opportunity Task Force, formed in 1995, found discrimination in low promotion rates for minorities and complaints about the administration of justice. Also, seemingly minor instances of subtle racism seem to be more pervasive. For example, 14 Black drill sergeants were accused of sexually exploiting recruits at Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD, in 1997. All the women accusing them were white.<sup>7</sup> Also, an African-American Navy captain slated to be head of the elite Navy SEALs was accused of making improper overtures to two white, female subordinates while he directed the Navy's Equal Opportunity and Sexual Harassment Prevention Office. Though he was acquitted, he was denied the chance for promotion to admiral.<sup>8</sup> Instances like these create a highly charged climate for today's officers. Most minority officers can share personal stories of experiencing a sense of “double standard” justice or had minority friends who could not withstand perceptions/accusations from white colleagues or subordinates. Besides

this, the low representation of minorities at the flag and general officer rank; the relative underrepresentation of minorities in certain career tracks (combat arms); and the apparent differences in perceptions between whites and minorities about evaluations, promotions and assignments are also some major areas to look at.

## **MINORITY REPRESENTATION**

According to the Defense Manpower Data Center, in 1997, African Americans made up 11 percent of the Active Duty Officers in the Army, Hispanics made up 3.4 percent and a listing loosely classified as other, which included Asian Americans, Native Americans and others made up 5 percent.<sup>9</sup> Leaders within the Department of Defense have voiced the military's goal of having minority representation that reflects larger society. However, Hispanics are grossly underrepresented as they make up 11.4 percent of the country's population (12.8 percent if Puerto Rico is included).

The percentage of minorities within the pay grade structure of the officer corps is a clear indicator of their experiences in the Army. Active duty military served in the pay grades of O-1 through O-10. In 1997, African Americans made up 11.4 percent of personnel who served in the junior grades of O-1 through O-3; Hispanics made up 4 percent; and Asian-Americans, Native Americans and other made up 6 percent. (These ranks were second lieutenant, first lieutenant and captain.) For grades O-4 to O-6, the percentages dip slightly. African Americans made up 10.6 percent; Hispanics made up 2.7 percent; and Asian Americans, Native Americans and other made up 3.6 percent. (The ranks for this pay grade were major, lieutenant colonel and colonel.) The proportion of minorities, however, decreases in the highest pay grades. In the most senior grades of O-7 to O-10, African Americans made up only 8.6 percent; Hispanics made up only 0.6 percent; and Asian Americans, Native Americans and other comprised of 1.6 percent. (The rank for this pay grade was for general.)

By stark contrast, whites made up 80.5 of the general Army population in 1997 but enjoyed a greater proportion of its personnel serving in the highest pay grades of O-7 to O-10 at 90.1 percent. At the other two pay grades, whites made up 80 percent of personnel in the O-1 to O-3 pay grade and 83.1 percent at the O-4 to O-6 pay grade.<sup>10</sup>

Earlier statistics had shown that for the years 1984 and 1985, 72 percent of black officers, compared to 66 percent of white officers, had left the service before they were eligible for consideration for promotion to major.<sup>11</sup>

The obvious disparity in the minority versus majority representation in the Army points to a bigger picture. While the Army boasts of its non-discriminatory practices, there exist some

internal levels of pervasive racism that prevent one group from reaching the top as easily as the other. And reaching these upper pay scales is desirable as one clear-cut measure of success as it encourages retention, mentorship and in some instances, eminence and respect, as is the case with General John Abizaid (Arab American) or General (ret) Eric Shinseki (Asian American). The opportunity for minorities to reach these upper echelons may be traced back to recruitment.

## **OFFICER RECRUITMENT**

A primary requirement for entry into the officer corps in the military is a bachelor's degree from an accredited four-year college or university. Though some opportunities exist for a non-college graduate to become a commissioned officer, virtually all officers in the active forces and most in the Reserve and National Guard hold at least a bachelor's degree. By and large the primary path to becoming an officer is through the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program, established at over 1,200 colleges and universities nationwide.

Another route for newly commissioned officers, though for a much smaller proportion, is the three Service Academies—the Military Academy in West Point, NY; the Naval Academy at Annapolis, MD; and the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, CO. These have been considered premier sources of career officers. And still others may opt to be commissioned through Officer Candidate School or Officer Training School (OCS/OTS), a 10- to 16-week program that provides a solid pathway for college graduates to enter the military.

The particular commissioning criteria depend upon the pathway chosen. Stringent physical, medical, and dental standards must be met. One must also pass a physical fitness test of coordination, strength, endurance, speed and agility, as well as submitting to an extensive medical examination and a review of records. Court records of juvenile delinquency, arrests and drug use are usually disqualifiers. Single parents are not eligible for commissioning and to attend one of the Service Academies, one must be single.<sup>12</sup>

Also, the type of academic majors one studies also determines the pathway to success in the Army. The emphasis is on engineering, science, math and computer science. Other majors encouraged include economics, business, foreign language and political science. Though not out of the question, majors in English or the humanities can also be recruited but at lower levels. The Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) or the American College Test (ACT) and academic records are other qualifiers for recruitment.

This issue of education is one of the four principal determinants to success or failure of minority officers, according to LTC Remo Butler who had distributed a questionnaire seeking to

answer the question why black officers fail. The results of his survey led him to believe the biggest problem for black junior officers is the poor military education that many receive before coming on active duty. Black officers who graduate from West Point or a predominantly white institution seem to have a better chance of succeeding than black officers who graduate from historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The difference may lie in the quality and professionalism of the ROTC programs offered at the latter and the career competitiveness of the instructors who teach there.<sup>13</sup> One of the questionnaire respondents said, "Maybe our ROTC programs are not stressing professional behavior and need closer observation." <sup>14</sup>

But beyond the ROTC programs there seems to be a significantly larger proportion of minorities represented in the subjects that may not lead to an accelerated career path; liberal arts and the social sciences; fields less in demand by the Army. Between 1994 and 1995, 11.6 percent of African Americans, 4.9 percent of Hispanics, 11 percent of Asians and .5 percent of Native Americans had computer science or a related subject as a selected major for their bachelor's degrees. For whites, it was 72.1 percent. <sup>15</sup>

Although minority representation among computer science majors is competitive, it is not that way for all the sciences. African-American representation in engineering was 5.1 percent; for Hispanics, it was 4.7 percent; for Asians, 12.1 percent; and for Native Americans, 0.4 percent. These educational differences, as well as variations in college enrollment, course of study and graduation rates, serve to limit the numbers of racial and ethnic minorities who meet the criteria for entry into the Army. Commissioning into the officer corps is competitive, requiring substantial academic preparation and other accomplishments. Those who do not meet the basic educational criteria will find it difficult to stay, far less succeed in the Army, as the training, and assignments are given. Preparation for the officer corps, more so than any other profession, must begin early—well before the officer accessioning point. The later and less intensive the intervention, the less likely it is to have a sizable impact on entry into the officer ranks and a successful career.<sup>16</sup>

## **OFFICER TRAINING AND ASSIGNMENT**

Job assignments can be a very important factor in determining how far and how fast an individual will advance in the officer corps. The necessary developmental series of jobs can lead to a successful and rewarding career path. The basic requirements, as stated in Army Regulation 600-3, are training at a branch specific school and assignment to a unit where the individual will normally serve in a position leading soldiers (either in tactical or support operation). With few exceptions, officers are expected to spend their initial assignment with

troops; while many will serve in an assistant staff officer job at the battalion or brigade level. This basic level assignment hones the officer's tactical and technical acumen, and begins the socialization and assimilation process into the Army's culture.

Assignment to specialties, such as aviation, require some proficiency in special aptitudes, in addition to other qualifications. In the Army, officers are awarded specialties on the basis of college major, class standing and needs of the Services, as well as the desires of the individual.

Among minority officers, there has been much concern whether their progression for certain competitive jobs has been comparable to whites. Key jobs include command and primary staff at brigade, division and corps levels. Research has shown that in 1997, minorities are relatively concentrated in the non-combat related skills such as engineering/maintenance, administration and supply/procurement, as well as healthcare. Blacks made up 5 percent of those involved in tactical operations; Hispanics made up one percent; and Asian Americans, Native Americans and other made up one percent among the three selected services—the Army, Navy and the Air Force.<sup>17</sup> Contrasting these numbers to white officers, at 89 percent, the disparity becomes more obvious.

But even when such jobs are secured, some minorities experience feelings of inadequacy because of a lack of support from the other staff, probably due to the hidden factor, many of them suspect. Furthermore, this sense does not diminish as the officer progresses. The lack of “moral support” on top of that continuous need to prove oneself magnifies with each advance in rank, causes undue stress on the officer.<sup>18</sup> The staffing at the division and corps levels lacks adequate minority representation in operational positions, stepping stones to future key jobs and promotions. Solid preparation at this juncture is key to those seeking to fill Pentagon policy-making jobs or positions interfacing with Congress or the White House. Since long-term success in the military often depends on getting early or multiple commands, minorities almost always fall behind as soon as they are recruited and trained. Thus, the Army may be losing qualified candidates before they even reach the upper ranks. Also, minorities fall behind in career-enhancing assignments as in combat arms.

## **EVALUATION**

As officers move through the hierarchy of the Army, performance evaluations affect their careers. While job-related behaviors are the focus of these evaluations, other factors to be considered include leadership abilities, competence, technical knowledge, tactical proficiency, integrity, team building etc. Performance evaluations also factor heavily in each officer's

assessment of his or her future military career opportunities. As such, these become critical determinants in an officer's decision to stay or leave.

The career advancement of an Army officer hinges on the Officer Evaluation Reports (OERs), a single document that promotion boards rely on to make a recommendation. Col. Keith Maxie, who has studied the officer promotion pipeline, was reported as saying that succeeding in the Army becomes a problem when a young minority officer reports to his or her unit and receives little or no guidance on career-enhancing assignments and the importance of a good OER. In today's Army, an officer cannot have a weak OER and continue to be promoted. However, some young black officers are being told that a weaker OER "gives them room to grow, and therefore they accept one without questioning it."<sup>19</sup>

This segues into the issue of mentorship in the Army. Because of what was outlined earlier, it is easy to ascertain that the relatively small number of senior minority officers creates an environment of fewer role models for young minorities to emulate; and fewer mentors to show the officers the ropes and the pitfalls. The term mentorship in contemporary use describes a wide range of relationships including coaching, teaching, networking, advising and evaluating. Mentorship implies more than just good leadership, as it involves a more senior or experienced person taking a substantial personal (in addition to professional) interest in a junior, less-experienced person's future. The mentor serves as a guide, a sage, with advice and experience that he or she voluntarily bestows upon the protégé. This personal aspect is important, as the classic notion of mentorship implies a genuine fondness and respect between the two.

A mentor of a particular ethnicity who understands and perhaps, even comes from a particular culture in terms of personality, profession, life-style, personal interests, background, home, family, religion, and other such aspects, can usually relate best to that younger officer. The Army doctrine contains regulations concerning mentorship at the direct leadership level (battalion and below). FM 22-100 states, "As a leader, you help your subordinates internalize Army values. You also assist them in developing the individual attributes, learning the skills, and mastering the actions required to become leaders of character and competence themselves. You do this through the action of mentoring."<sup>20</sup> Mentoring falls underneath the broader heading of "Improving Actions," which are "things leaders do to leave their organizations better than they found them."<sup>21</sup> If an officer arrives at a unit without sufficient education about military etiquette, someone must teach him about the norms and expectations of military society. Any type of social setting for a new officer can be a daunting experience, especially if he is the only minority member there.

One of the most well-recognized retired or active duty four-star generals is Secretary of State Colin L. Powell. In his 1995 autobiography, *My American Journey*, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and National Security Advisor, talked about being mentored by senior Nixon aides, Frank Carlucci and Caspar Weinberger, while he served as a fellow in President Nixon's Office of Management and Budget. The high-powered contacts proved invaluable to Powell through the 1970s and 1980s as the personable young officer rose swiftly through the ranks. When Ronald Reagan swept to victory in 1980, Powell's allies—Weinberger and Carlucci—took over the Defense Department as secretary of defense and deputy secretary of defense, respectively. When they arrived at the Pentagon, Powell was then a full colonel.

But before Powell could move to the top echelons of the U.S. military, he needed to earn his first general's star. That required a few command assignments in the field. So, under Carlucci's sponsorship, Powell received brief assignments at Army bases in Kansas and Colorado.<sup>22</sup> Powell's experience exemplifies the extent to which mentorship can literally serve as a propeller in a military career.

Secretary Powell admitted to experiencing incidents of racism, though they were isolated and generally off post, but he dealt with them without much rancor. "Race is a problem," Powell said in a 1996 interview. "Let it be someone else's problem. What you have to do is do your very best, study, work hard, believe in yourself, believe in your country."

Many young minorities too often fail to seek a mentor early on, or they only seek help during a crisis. While the Army puts some effort into the mentoring program, minorities seem to receive little or no mentoring or counseling except at OER time. Many minority officers don't even realize they have the right or the responsibility to talk to their senior rater.

The key gates in the Army for improved promotion opportunity to LTC are successful company command, performance as an executive officer (XO) operations officer (S-3), completion of a MEL 4 education requirement, or some other branch specific equivalent job. Commanders usually have influence in the selection of their S-3 and XO. Many commanders rarely get to know all the minority officers in their units. These officers are probably not going to be a first choice as a protégé, not necessarily because of their ability to do a job, but simply because they are unknowns. The importance of these jobs cannot be overstated. All officers, with particular emphasis on minorities who may not have had as much exposure, must be made aware that failure to get these jobs and perform successfully will limit promotion opportunities.



## PROMOTION AND RETENTION

Officer career progression is the result of events culminating in promotion and retention. Promotion is the process by which officers are selected by the services to advance to the next grade. Retention is the decision made by an officer to remain in the service during the time interval between promotional boards.<sup>23</sup> Achieving a particular rank, like O-4 for example, is the result of a number of promotion selections and a number of retention decisions. Though these are not necessarily independent, a number of officers will decide to separate because they do not expect to be selected for their next promotion. The distinction between promotion and retention becomes important when looking at the career progression of different groups.

In a recent study by COL Susan Myers, results show that promotion boards in the Army use both subjective and objective considerations when selecting officers for promotion. Subjective consideration is nearly unavoidable. The face in the required photograph in an applicant's file shows the individual's race, ethnicity and sex as well as his or her adherence to Army standards of hair length, fitness, bearing, or the like.<sup>24</sup> The objective criteria provided to each board is not always the same over time. Standard categories like years of service and level of military education may remain unchanged, but the specific criteria within each category can vary to match the needs of the service at a particular time – and thus affect both the numbers of, and backgrounds of, individuals selected for promotion to a given position.

Promotion is based on manner of performance, education and completion of military training. The senior ranks of the officer corps are heavily populated with Academy graduates, who have a narrow demographical background. The source of pre-commissioning education affects the likelihood of promotion. It also shapes an officer's career pattern by influencing branch selection and assignments. Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy must all be placed within the personnel system before the Army can determine where, and how many, other new officers are needed. The Academy typically produces a high concentration of graduates with a tactical background, and many Academy graduates elect to go to combat arms branches. The majority of minorities are commissioned in the officer corps through the Reserve Officer Training Corps. With most of the combat arms needs filled by Academy graduates, fewer ROTC officers are assigned to combat arms branches and more are assigned to support branches. In this, the officer corps demographics are almost opposite of those of the enlisted corps—in which a large number of minorities can and do select and enter combat arms career fields for quicker promotions.

Military education, that schooling expected of active duty personnel to prepare them for greater responsibilities and provide them with special skills needed by the Army, is also an

important criteria for promotion. Specific levels of military education must be attained to be eligible for each successive level of promotion. Selection of officers in mid-career to attend advanced military schooling, can place those who do not immediately excel or receive average performance reports at a serious disadvantage. Academy graduates, with their greater depth of military training, are likely to obtain more positive early Officer Efficiency Reports (OERs) than ROTC graduates. Civilian graduate education can enhance - opportunities for promotion selection. Twenty-one percent of all graduate degrees in the officer corps are held by service academy graduates, even though they constitute only 10 percent of active duty officers.

The Army needs 4500 company grade officers, but it needs only 1600 officers at the rank of Major. The required 1600 officers can easily be filled by officers voluntarily and involuntarily remaining in the Army. If the number of company grade officers electing to separate from the Army does not sufficiently reduce the number of officers wanting to be retained, the promotion board for selection to major will limit the number of officers it selects on a "best qualified basis" to fit the 1600-officer ceiling. Those officers not selected for promotion are then involuntarily separated. Studies show that minority officers elect to be retained at a higher rate than do white officers and Black officers from HBCUs elect to be retained at a higher rate than Black officers from majority colleges and universities. Just the opposite is seen for Distinguished Military Students (DMS), Distinguished Military Graduates (DMG) and officers having academic backgrounds as college science and math majors. They voluntarily separate at a higher rate than non DMS/DMG ROTC graduates. And USMA graduates attrite at a higher rate than the aggregate rate for all ROTC graduates.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is the view of this author that minority officers, when compared to white officers, do have a problem with promotion rates, retention rates and selection rates for command assignments. Minority officers are not progressing in rank and responsibilities at the same rate as their white counterparts. Some minority groups appear to be left behind more often than others. This is especially true for Hispanics, who are grossly underrepresented in proportion to their numbers in the population.

But not all disparity is necessarily attributable to racism. Some of the cause for these anomalies may to some degree result from the way ROTC cadets are educated and assimilated into the Army. The "ROTC phenomenon" - is a likely contributor to a lack of combat arms experience and sought-after early developmental assignments. It may be equally at fault as a source of low individual performance/low OER ratings. The sparse number of minority role

models and the narrow access of minorities to adequate mentoring can also keep a minority junior officer from outgrowing his or her lack of awareness of military cultural expectations. All of above could contribute to the low rate of success experienced by minority officers. The following recommendations, although broad, could make a difference in improving the chances for minority officers to have better opportunities for successful careers: <sup>25</sup>

- There needs to be a more aggressive approach to recruiting and commissioning individuals with diverse racial, ethnic, gender and socio-economic backgrounds. The U.S. Army needs to expand its recruitment pool. It should focus beyond college graduates and turn toward other young people who may bring value to the program. For example those who have two year degrees or specialized technical/ vocational training may bring some unique talents to the recruitment pool. Officers serving in assignments that recruit and train young cadets must be carefully screened, selected, and rewarded on-par with officers who teach at the US Military Academy. That does not happen now.
- Educate the civilian population more about the U.S. Army. Invite residents to open forums and discussions about the Army. (This will mitigate the negative press it has been receiving from the media since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom) By opening up the Army to outsiders, they will be educated and this may increase the willingness of parents, guardians, other adult role models and opinion makers to recommend an Army career to more American minorities from various backgrounds. When role models and mentors promote the advantages of a military career early in the development of potential officers, chances of success are multiplied ten-fold.
- Have senior ranking Army officials and role models of all ethnicities visit the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) or schools with a high concentration of minority cadets. Expand mentorship opportunities very early in the accessions process. Also, encourage retired combat arms officers (who are now CEOs, SESs, or in some other decision making position) to visit HBCUs and mentor a minority. The U.S. Army is an enigma to many of these students. By exposing them to these role models, they have a real chance to envision what a future in the Army holds for them. Also encourage these leaders to talk to the parents, guardians, or other role models of cadets.
- Outsource to civilian public relations consultants who could develop a strategic communications plan that clearly demonstrates the value of being assigned to a combat arms branch, and how this experience correlates to post-military professional

opportunities. Also, the Army could use its own marketing and public relations team to develop a new message for the Army, beyond the current one, "Army of One," which is now outdated and a bit trite. The future operational environment and our workforce will be vastly different and multi-culture in nature.

- Assemble and provide information to the media, the general public or Army personnel on minority generals (past and present) and current combat arms colonels to highlight their success as examples of those who made it despite the odds. Focus on how they, where appropriate, transitioned to civilian society and leveraged their combat arms background.
- Ensure that the criteria for assigning junior officers to branches and assignments are appropriate and applied equally. The Army probably has to re-evaluate the criteria it currently uses. It has to be more specific and achievable. But even further, the Army has to enforce it. It must ensure that senior officers apply the criteria equally among junior officers, or they will incur stiffer penalties. The Army must move beyond rhetoric about its progress in providing equal opportunity, and actually do it. Within the Army itself there are factions that do not support this (many are in leadership positions) and view these actions as reverse discrimination. This small officer segment needs to be convinced otherwise through various equal opportunity (EO) channels.
- Encourage Army leaders to fully embrace mentor responsibilities more aggressively, particularly for those officers that are identified early as having any form of professional or personal shortcoming. This requirement extends to helping the officer in developing competitive performance skills, and in selecting and pursuing career enhancing assignments.
- Structure military personnel policies so they are consistent with long-term societal demographic fluctuations. The demographics of the United States are changing. It has been projected that the numbers of minorities in this country will continue to expand. In fact, projections have been made that by year 2050 the White population will decrease from 75 to 50 percent, the African-American Population will increase from 32 to 54 million (from 12 to 14 percent), the Hispanic population will increase from 27 to 95 million (from 9 to 25 percent) and the Asian population will increase from 9 to 34 million (from 3 to 8 percent). The Army has to reflect this. By using diversity as its ultimate goal, the Army could deliberately put in place various policies that will encourage and facilitate it.

- Conduct a review to determine the causes of the relative lower promotion among minorities over the past five years for LTC and above. Reviewing past actions might be a good start to restructuring the personnel policies. The review may point to glaring inconsistencies that limit minority promotion. Once the review is complete, if a discrepancy is found, steps should be initiated to eliminate it and prevent it from ever occurring again.
- Commission an outside study on minority officers to determine if, and why highly competitive officers are leaving the Army at a higher rate than average officers. This study might provide valuable insight into how minorities are faring in the Army. By using a questionnaire, observing personnel interaction, training, performance of tasks and assignments, the study may be able to definitively provide some answers, which can be used as a basis for change.
- From some of the findings of the review and the study, the Army could create a permanently assigned body that continually monitors diversity. This small organization should be located at Human Resources Command (HRC) or the Pentagon. It will provide a better area for recourse for minority personnel who have felt the sting of discrimination.

## CONCLUSION

The task of answering the question “Can Minorities Succeed in Today’s Army?” presents many challenges. While success can be measured, it is usually measured differently by each individual. What one person considers success may be considered failure by another.

This paper defines key points in increasing the understanding about different milestones on the career path of officers in the U.S. Army. It examines officers’ progression through recruiting, commissioning, training, assignment, evaluation, promotion and retention; and discusses how leadership, education, and developmental assignments, as well as the more uncontrollable attainments of long-term mentoring or cultural assimilation influences the rate of officer progression in achieving those milestones, and the likelihood of achieving senior leader status. This paper shows that based on historical data, the U.S. Army has indeed come a long way from overt institutionalized and socially supported racism to the point that racism is neither institutionally nor socially acceptable (given that the Army policy is “zero tolerance” for such practices). But despite such success, racism still exists in unacknowledged ways that are very difficult to objectively quantify. Evidence of racism is more likely found at the recruit-to-recruit level than at senior officer level. Some minorities still see discrimination at the supervisor-

recruit level, because their minority has lower rates of selection for promotion or developmental assignments.

The paper points to the reduced percentages of minorities within each ascending pay grade of the officer corps as an indicator that promotions of minority officers lags behind promotion of white officers. To make it to the senior ranks, junior officers need to be promoted and retained between promotions. Minorities are more likely to be heavily concentrated in the O-1 to O-3 pay grades than the O-7 to O-10 grades, with Hispanics suffering more disproportionately than other minorities. The research did not reflect that race or gender had any effect on promotion boards. The promotion board results were objectively based on key assignments and performance demonstrated by the evaluated officer. However, performance is a result of education, and those accepted into the military from “the better schools” display higher levels of educational achievement—which can lead to excellent performance, which leads to higher ratings on performance evaluations.

Indeed, the entire paper is subjective, with no clear cut answer on whether minorities can succeed in today’s transforming Army. The larger picture points out that institutionalized racism, perceptions and stereotypes can serve as a hindrance to unfettered progression in the Army for all minorities. The paper also shows that minorities may be more able to succeed if they can align themselves with a mentor as soon as they are able after entering the Army. Having a mentor can make the difference between an officer’s willingness to stay with the Army or a desire to leave it. But, at times, cultural perceptions prevent minorities from even considering mentorship a valuable tool. And lack of many minority combat arms role models remains a problem at HBCU’s and non-HBCU’s having a high concentration of minority cadets.

Becoming successful by making use of whatever opportunities are available *is* possible in the Army. Many officers succeed in spite of racial differences. It is even possible to get to the top, as in the case of Secretary of State Colin Powell, although cases like his have so far been rare. Minority officers want to lead; or they wouldn’t have made the military their career choice. They don’t ask for guaranteed success; they just want the opportunity to earn it.

Historically, the Army has taken pride in its belief that it has set a precedent and has served as an example in terms of its minority integration and acceptance. The Army has been lauded for providing equal opportunities that at that time surpassed those of wider society. It also has been praised as the nation’s leading agency in developing policies that ensure all personnel are given an equal chance at advancement. Yet, there are certain segments in the Army that still see themselves as, and probably are, “undervalued, underestimated and marginalized.”<sup>26</sup> Unless systemic racism is permanently eradicated from society, the Army can

only continue to reflect the society it draws from. The differences in perspective explored for this paper make it difficult to conclude whether or not success in the Army achieved by dint of uniformly available, officially encouraged means is as possible for minority officers as it is for white officers. Commanders and majority whites seem to see one reality, while minorities seem to see another.

This paper recommends ways that may be able to transform today's Army to the Army of the future. While there can be no single way to make this kind of leap, systematically chipping away at inequalities or perceived discrimination is a goal worth striving for.

WORD COUNT=6,682

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Army Regulation 600-2, "Command Policy: Update," Chapter 6, "Equal Opportunity Program in the Army," para. 6-3

<sup>2</sup> The American Heritage Book of English Usage, A Practical and Authoritative Guide to Contemporary English, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Gonzalo Santos, Diversity & Unity in U.S. Society: Race and Ethnic Relations, Pine Forge Press, an imprint of Sage Publications, Lecture, California State University at Bakersfield, 2003

<sup>4</sup> Remo Butler, "Why Black Officers Fail," Parameters, U.S. Army War College Quarterly, Autumn 1999, p. 59

<sup>5</sup> Gerald Patton, *War and Race*, New York: Greenwood, 1981

<sup>6</sup> Cpt. Schuyler C. Webb and Master Sgt. William J. Herrmann, "Historical Overview of Racism in the Military," Directorate of Research, Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, 2002, p. 19

<sup>7</sup> Gregory Vistica and Evan Thomas, "At War in the Ranks," *Newsweek*, August 11, 1997, p. 32

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Office of the Under Secretary of Defense Personnel and Readiness, "Career Progression of Minority and Women Officers," DoD, p. 10

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Chief, Officer Promotions, Unofficial for LTC Butler, 6 September 1995

<sup>12</sup> Office of the Under Secretary, p. 16

<sup>13</sup> Butler, p. 59

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Office of the Under Secretary, p. 30

<sup>16</sup> Norman Baldwin, "The Promotion Board of the United States: Glass Ceilings in the Officer Corps," *Public Administration Review*, 56 (2), March/April 1996, pp. 199-206.

<sup>17</sup> Office of the Under Secretary, p. 44

<sup>18</sup> Col. Carrie Kendrick, "African American Officers' Role in the Future Army," Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 1998, p. 33

<sup>19</sup> Neff Hudson, "Promotion Probe Finds Racial Gap," *Army Times*, 4 December 1995, p.6



<sup>20</sup> US Army, Field Manual 22-100, *Army Leadership* (Washington: Department of the Army, 31 August 1999), p. 5-15, para. 5-82.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Colin Powell with Joseph Persico, *My American Journey: An Autobiography*, Random House, NY 1995, p. 165

<sup>23</sup> Office of the Under Secretary, p. 55

<sup>24</sup> Susan R. Myers, "An Evaluation of the United States Army Equal Opportunity Program Design and Effectiveness," Department of Distance Education, U.S. Army War College, 12 December 2003, *passim*.

<sup>25</sup> Carol S. Smith, COL, Deputy Chief of Staff, USAAC, Diversity Website created for author, 11 February 2004, *passim*.

<sup>26</sup> Joe Madison, "The Joe Madison Show," WOL 1450, Washington, D.C.

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